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## THE ELEMENT OF LOVE IN NISSIM EZEKIEL'S "NIGHT OF THE SCORPION"

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### Abstract:

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the front-runners in early modern Indian poetry and was the first Indian poet to express modern Indian sensibility in the modern idiom. He has been influential on the course of succeeding Indian English poetry. The poem is apparently a simple narration but dramatically making us understand that the poet reminisces the night when his mother was stung by a scorpion. A scorpion has been forced by persistent rain to seek shelter inside, under a sack of rice and ends up stinging the mother of the family, which brings people flocking to her side wanting to express their sympathy. The poem also reveals the most striking and interesting contrast in the approach of the people towards the suffering mother and the rationalistic attitude of the father who eventually tries every scientific method to assuage the wife's pain. The role of a husband trying to save his wife is beautifully described in the lines "trying every curse and blessing, powder, mixture, herb, and hybrid". He even attempts to pour a little paraffin on the bitten toe as a last resort to protect his wife from suffering.

Keywords: front-runners, modern idiom, Indian English poetry, Indian sensibility,.etc

## Introduction

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the front-runners in early modern Indian poetry and was the first Indian poet to express modern Indian sensibility in the modern idiom. He has been influential on the course of succeeding Indian English poetry.

Ezekiel's poetic output include: *Time to Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems*(1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Snakeskin and Other Poems* (1974), *Hymns in Darkness* (1976), *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982), and *Collected Poems 1952-88* (1989).

"*Night of the Scorpion*" is a strong, yet simple Poem on the power of love. It has been taken from his volume of poems entitled "The Exact Name" and is considered as one of the finest poems for its admirable depiction of common Indian situation, vivid imagery, ironic contrasts and warmth of human love and affection.

The poem is apparently a simple narration but dramatically making us understand that the poet reminisces the night when his mother was stung by a scorpion. A scorpion has been forced by persistent rain to seek shelter inside, under a sack of rice and ends up stinging the mother of the family, which brings people flocking to her side wanting to express their sympathy. It also shows the love and concern of the peasants in the neighborhood pouring in like 'swarms of flies' to help alleviate the mother's pain not only through their relentless endeavors of searching for the scorpion but also strongly hoping that the scorpion would not move.

The lines "With candles and with lanterns throwing giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls they searched for him" highlight the positive side of the people. The people buzzing the name of God a hundred times, sitting on the floor around the mother and consoling her captures the simplicity and brim of warmth. The repetition of the word 'May' and chanting of prayers is perceived as the peasant's concern for the suffering mother.

The poem also reveals the most striking and interesting contrast in the approach of the people towards the suffering mother and the rationalistic attitude of the father who eventually tries every scientific method to assuage the wife's pain. The role of a husband trying to save his wife is beautifully described in the lines "trying every curse and blessing, powder, mixture, herb, and hybrid". He even attempts to pour a little paraffin on the bitten toe as a last resort to protect his wife from suffering.

Religion also plays its role with the holy man performing his rites to tame the poison with an incantation, but the irony is that all the three prove to be futile and vain. The poet draws our attention to the power of love in all their efforts to bring relief to the suffering mother despite the fact that the pain subsides naturally.

The Poem also creates a profound impact on the reader with an interplay of images relating to good and evil, light and darkness. The scorpion is regarded as the "evil one" and acquires a certain character and personality, reminding us of the evil in the world. It is considered an evil force bringing pain, hardships and even death.

#### Conclusion

The mother suffers from pain for twenty long hours and at the end of it thanks God for sparing her children. The selfless love of a mother is beautifully described by the poet in the last three lines which says, "Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children".

#### References

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